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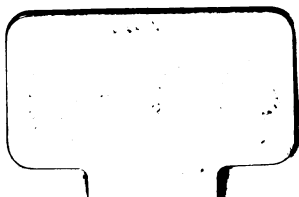
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THE DAYDREAM

THE
FAIRIES OF ALL TIME

OR

THE WAYSIDE BLESSINGS

A Medley of the Past and Present

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. A. S.



EDINBURGH:
R. GRANT & SON, 107 PRINCES STREET.

1875

251. c. 350

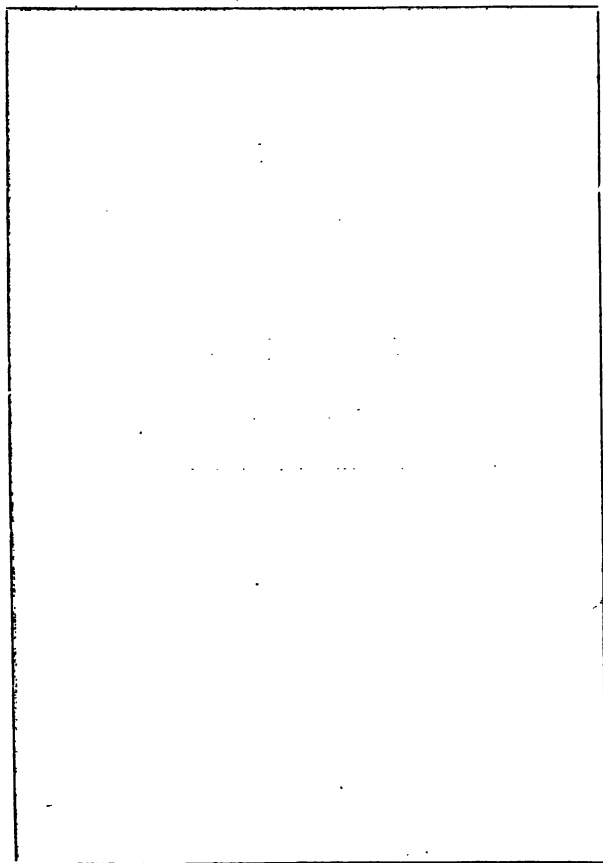
At this still season of repose and peace,
When all things that are not at rest are cheerful,

Why should we thus with an untoward mind,
And in the weakness of humanity,
From natural wisdom turn our hearts away,
To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears,
And feeding on disquiet, thus disturb
The calm of nature with our restless thoughts."—
WORDSWORTH.

To Mabel Helen

"ANNIE'S"

LITTLE DAUGHTER



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CHAPTER I.

THE REASON WHY.



T was the weekly half-holiday, and Annie, a little girl, just ten years old, was passing it very much to her own satisfaction, seated under a beech-tree on the lawn, with Bob, the wisest and handsomest of rough-haired terriers on one side, a basket of strawberries on the other, and a volume of Fairy tales on her lap ; while her younger brother, Harry, was lying on the grass at a little distance, and being of a philosophical turn of mind and a persevering disposition, was dividing his energies between *Peter Parley* and the vain endeavour to throw cherries up in the air and catch them in his mouth as they fell—a game imported by his elder brothers on their last return home for the holidays from one of the most celebrated seats of classic learning. Margaret, their eldest sister, was seated a little farther off, making her first attempt at sketching from nature, having selected for that purpose the green-house, which,

though not a particularly picturesque object, had the advantage of numerous straight lines, and, as Margaret sapiently observed, "afforded excellent practice." Margaret's constant attendant, the little four years' old Bessie, was sitting at her feet, administering correction to a refractory doll with one of Margaret's best drawing pencils, which, between the times of punishment, she stuck point downwards in the grass "to keep it thafe," while she made sundry experiments with the indiarubber, rather to the detriment of that useful article. Bob, the rough-haired terrier, put his head between his legs, and shading his eyes with his long ears, enjoyed a very comfortable nap; but whenever Annie finished a chapter, and began to devote herself to the strawberries, Bob awoke, and after giving sundry thumps on the grass with his tail, to attract attention, he laid his head on Annie's lap, and licked his lips in a manner peculiar to himself; Annie and Bob then partook together of a very refreshing little repast, after which Annie resumed her book, and Bob resumed his nap, to repeat the same pantomime, and with the same result, at the conclusion of every chapter.

At last Annie closed her book, and said with

a sigh, "O dear, I wish there were fairies now !"

Harry did not seem to find *Peter Parley* particularly interesting, at least he was not so much engrossed by it as not to hear Annie's sorrowful exclamation, and being, as I have said, somewhat of a philosopher, he turned round and called out, "Nonsense, Annie ; I don't believe there ever were fairies, and I know there are none *now*."

"I know that, Harry," replied the much-enduring Annie, "I only said I wished there *were*."

"Wished there were what?" said a voice behind her ; and looking up Annie saw her mother, who had joined the party unperceived.

"Oh, mama," said Annie, "I was only saying I wished there were fairies now."

"And I told Annie, mama," said Harry, rising from the grass and coming nearer the strawberries, "that there never had been any fairies, and there could not be any now."

"I am not quite sure," said mama quietly, "that there are no fairies now."

"Oh, mama !" exclaimed Annie.

"Oh, mama !" exclaimed Harry.

The words were the same, but the tones were

very different ; the one was the tone of delighted hope, the other that of contemptuous disbelief.

"Yes," said their mama, "I believe there are fairies now, and I think we may find a story to prove it."

"Oh, mama," said Margaret, who, with her little shadow Bessie, had just joined the party round the beech-tree ; "Oh, mama, you will write a story," and immediately a general cry was raised of "Oh do, mama ; pray do !"

"But, mama," said Harry, "I don't like fairy tales ; I like stories of Kings and Barons and Castles."

"Oh, but Harry," interrupted Annie, "mama promised it should be about fairies—they must be good, mama."

"And useful, I hope," said Margaret, with a slight accent of superiority.

"And *pitty*," lisped the little Bessie, shaking her sunny curls.

"Oh, mercy, mercy," cried mama ; "I am afraid I have made rather a rash promise—Castles, and Kings, and Barons, for Harry ; good fairies for Annie ; useful fairies for Margaret ; and pretty fairies for my little Bessie. Well, at any rate, I will try, though

I am afraid there will be rather a sameness in the fairies—all good, all useful, all pretty.

“ ‘Shining on, shining on, by no shadow made tender,
Till Love falls asleep, in the sameness of splendour.’ ”

“But when will it be ready, mama?” asked Harry, who did not like poetry, and was rather afraid of quotations.

“Let me see,” said mama; “when is our next whole holiday? Oh, Annie’s birthday, is it not? I will not promise, but I will try and have it finished by that time; and now you must run in, and get ready for tea, or papa will think we have all been spirited away by these wonderful fairies.”

Annie’s longed-for birthday at length arrived, and a beautiful bright day it was. Annie was up with the lark, and ran to her mama’s room, where, after the warm caress and the whispered blessing, she heard the plans of pleasure arranged for the day. Theirs was a quiet neighbourhood, and they had few companions, but all their young friends within reach had been invited to spend the afternoon, and the school children were also to be there. They were to have a romp in the hay-field, and tea and games on the lawn, after which the half-yearly

school prizes were to be distributed, with some additional prizes for running and jumping, in which gentle and simple were expected to join. Annie was afraid the story was not finished, and with what some people would call good-feeling, and others *tact*, checked the question that trembled on her tongue ; but her mama soon relieved her suspense by telling her the story was quite ready, and that, after breakfast, she would go and sit under the favourite beech-tree on the lawn and read it aloud. Away ran Annie to communicate the good news to Margaret and Harry, and as soon as breakfast was over, she and Harry rushed off to the lawn, where they were soon busily employed in hanging garlands from the lower branches of the old beech-tree, while thoughtful Margaret, with her faithful Bessie, brought cushions and plaids, with which they made a luxurious seat for mama.

The whole party had just completed their preparations when their mama appeared, with a mysterious-looking bag hanging on her arm. She was hailed with a shout of welcome, and conducted in triumph to her cushioned throne, with Annie, of course, in the place of honour on her right, and Margaret, with Bessie on her lap, seated on her left,

while Harry squatted himself in front, and undertook the somewhat difficult task of keeping Bób quiet, with this proviso, that the thumpings of his tail, which it was found impossible to control, should be interpreted as strong marks of approbation.

Margaret did not seem to have any qualms of conscience connected with unoccupied hands, and said she could not listen, if she did anything else; but Annie declared her intention of being very busy, and produced a kettle-holder, intended for grandmama, on which her little fingers had been employed for the last year. Her mama glanced at the rather ostentatious display of canvas, thimble, scissors, and bright-coloured wools spread out on Annie's lap, and perceived that the needle was awaiting; she however said nothing, and as Annie never made the discovery herself, it may be presumed the kettle-holder did not make much progress that forenoon.


All at once, and while the children were shaking themselves into quiet, with all those rustlings and fidgetings which accompany preparations for a good long silence, who should they see approaching but their papa. Such an honour was totally unexpected, and was received with loud

demonstrations of applause. A seat was hastily improvised with some spare plaids. Harry feared it was not very comfortable, but Margaret said it would do quite well, as papa would be sure not to stay very long ; which remark, insinuating papa's slight appreciation of mama's talents, he resented by a smart pinch on the ear.

When all were ready, the bag was unclasped and the volume produced. Harry stared with astonishment when he saw the thick note-book, with its closely-written pages, but he made no remark, for fear of postponing the reading, while Annie, though equally silent, was lost in wonder as to where her mama could possibly have got such a great long story. But hush ! the book is opened, and the story begins.

CHAPTER II.

THE DAY-DREAM.

“NCE upon a time,” but not very “long, long ago,” and on the evening of a sultry day in July, a boy about twelve years of age, weary and faint with long travel, was sitting on the steps of a large castellated mansion, and leaning his aching head against the arched doorway. The castle itself was not in ruins, indeed it seemed as if it would take long years before those massive walls and heavy carved mullions would show symptoms of decay ; but the grass-grown walks, the hanging creepers, the tangled flower-garden where the brier and the thistle strove for mastery, proclaimed that the castle was uninhabited. It was evident no master’s eye gazed on those fair scenes, no lady’s hand trained the roses round the stone trellis, no children’s feet chased the butterfly over those once smooth terraces, and made the woods resound with their merry laughter. All was silence and neglect,

and desolation reigned in the midst of the general solitude. The natural beauty of the scene, however, nothing could change. At a little distance, on the left, rose some craggy hills, their rocky summits appearing above the dark firs which fringed their sides. On the right, beyond the flower-garden and lawn, stretched a thick forest of oak and beech, while in front the undulating park sloped gradually down to a beautiful lake, now gently rippled by a soft summer breeze ; beyond which, as far as the eye could reach, were verdant fields and many-tinted woods, with here and there a white church spire glistening in the rays of the setting sun, while the landscape was bounded by a range of low hills, their outline scarcely defined against the evening sky.

Long and intently the boy gazed ; he seemed as if he would engrave the scene for ever on his mind ; but do not think he was a day-dreamer, one who would idly waste the precious hours of youth and hope in vain memories of the past, or still vainer visions of the future. Oh no ; he had been early taught to "act in the living present," and now that he was alone in the world, with none to direct his path or guide his faltering steps, he was resolved,

whatever difficulties might be before him, how hard soever the battle of life might be—

“To be a hero in the strife.”

Now, however, he felt as if he *must* gaze, perhaps for the last time, on the fair scene before him—for all that wide demesne was by right his own. Let him then dream on ; too soon the rough awakening will come, and we will go back a few years to the early childhood of Walter Courtelle.

CHAPTER III.

THE LORD OF THE CASTLE—KINGS AND BARONS FOR HARRY.



ALTER'S father, Harold Courtelle, was the lord of the fair barony of Courtelle, and never was landlord more universally or deservedly beloved. He married the orphan daughter of one of his childhood's friends, and with his wife and little son lived almost entirely on his estate, ever ready to relieve the unfortunate and protect the oppressed. He was sometimes obliged to go to court on special summons from the king, but he always went with reluctance ; for at that time a bigoted and tyrannical monarch filled the throne, and knowing the great influence of the Baron of Courtelle, he often wished to engage him on his side in attacks on the liberties of his poorer subjects, or indeed on all who in any way thwarted his will, or, as he thought, interfered with his prerogative. Notwithstanding the imminent danger of refusal, the Baron of Courtelle, encouraged by his high principled though trembling wife, braved on

many occasions the monarch's anger ; and even he, though armed with almost despotic power, feared the baron's uncompromising integrity and noble independence of character, and for long brooded silently over the vengeance he did not dare to take ; but at last an opportunity occurred and the blow fell.

A landed proprietor in the neighbourhood, named Morvin, in an evil moment, and when enraged beyond measure at some injustice from the king, had joined in an insurrection, the object of which was to force the king to abdicate in favour of his son ; the plan was ill organized, the plot discovered ere it was ripe, Morvin was seized, tried for high treason, condemned, and ordered for execution ; but before the fatal day arrived, confinement and disappointment did the headsmen's work, and he died in his solitary prison, leaving a wife and infant daughter to struggle alone with poverty and disgrace, in a world which he had found but too unfriendly.

The Baron of Courtelle was Morvin's oldest friend ; it was proved that a short time previously he had lent Morvin a considerable sum of money, and that about a fortnight before the plot was discovered he had spent some days at Morvin's house, during which time they were observed in long and

earnest conversation. In vain the baron protested he was entirely ignorant of the intended insurrection, in vain he explained all the circumstances connected with the loan of the money, and his private conversations with Morvin ; the time when might made right had hardly passed away, he underwent the mockery of a trial, and was of course found guilty. His life was spared, for despotic and unscrupulous as the monarch was, and enslaved and down-trampled as were the people, he dared not risk an outbreak of popular fury if the Baron of Courtelle, so loved and honoured, were condemned to death ; but his titles were forfeited, his lands confiscated, and he was banished for ever from the country he loved so well. To resist he knew was useless ; for resistance would have endangered not only his own life but the lives of his faithful followers, and for the sake of his wife and child, who were permitted to share his exile, he was forced to submit.

The day soon arrived, when, surrounded by a guard of soldiers, he bade adieu for ever to his ancestral halls ; he knew he left loving hearts behind him, but fear lay in every breast, and though tears stood in many an eye, no friendly adieux were

spoken, and not one kind voice was heard to say, "God bless you."

Walter was only three years old when he accompanied his father and mother in their exile, but *he* felt not the change which weighed down their spirits with gloomy forebodings, for the sadness passed from their hearts at the approach of their little son, and he was always welcomed with bright smiles and cheerful voices. The baron knew that for himself there was no prospect of return to his native land, but hope was strong within him for his son; he felt that sooner or later justice would be done, and he looked forward to the time when Walter should be old enough to receive the lessons of patriotism it was his earnest wish to instil—but it was willed otherwise. When Walter was little more than five years old, his father was seized with sudden illness, and after a few days of agonizing suspense and nights of anxious watching, the Baron of Courtelle was laid to sleep in that foreign land. Just before his death, little Walter was brought to him, and after giving him a father's blessing, he laid his hand for the last time on that fair head, and said in the words of the King of old, "O my son, be strong, be strong."

The sudden blow was too much for Walter's mother ; she felt she was soon to follow, and she determined, while strength was still left her, to return to her own country and seek a home for her orphan boy with an old and faithful nurse, who had tended her own infant years, and who she knew would watch with maternal tenderness over the precious charge committed to her care.

After some dangers, and much wearisome delay, the failing mother and her little son reached the secluded hamlet, about thirty miles from Courtelle, where old Bridget lived in her little ivy-covered cottage. I must pass over the joy of the poor wanderer at finding herself with her early friend and near her dearly-loved home, where her happiest days had been passed ; nor must I pause to describe the rapture of old Bridget, nor the fond attentions she lavished upon "her own dear child," as she called Walter's mother. It was early summer, and the softness of the season, the feeling of rest and peace, together with the careful solicitude of Bridget, seemed for a time to exert a beneficial influence over the invalid, and to restore her failing strength, to bring back the light to her eye and the colour to her cheek ; and she was able to ramble with Walter

along the sea-shore, and watch him as he drank in health and strength from the fresh sea-breeze.

But what Walter loved best was to sit at his mother's feet, beneath a weeping ash in the little garden, and hear her speak of his father, and repeat his parting words ; or to listen while she told him old stories of Fairyland, which have ever a fresh charm for the young imagination ; and being much alone, " Cinderella," " The Princess Rosetta," " Beauty and the Beast," and the " White Cat," became to him cherished companions, and familiar friends.

One evening, in the early autumn, Walter had been sitting as usual under his favourite ash, and after listening for the twentieth time to the wonders wrought by the fairy godmother, he rested his cheek upon his chubby little hand and fell into a reverie. Visions of cinders, princes, glass slippers, and golden chariots flitted before him, and he thought " O how delightful to have played a part in those wondrous transformations ;" he wished *he* had been in some way, however lowly, connected with the fairy story ; he was not very clear as to *what* he would like to have been—a mouse, a rat-trap, or a pumpkin, till at last he exclaimed " O

mama, what a pity there are no good fairies now." His mother smiled, a sad soft smile, as parting his fair curls she said, "Ah, my boy, there are plenty of good fairies now." Walter sprang up and gazed upon her with earnest and bewildered eyes, but before his wonder could find vent in words, Bridget appeared, and muttering that the evenings were getting chilly, led her lady into the house. Walter stood for some time, leaning against the tree, and pondering those words, "There are plenty of good fairies now;" the more he thought, the more perplexed he became, and he determined to ask for an explanation on the morrow.

On the morrow, however, Bridget came to him early, and with tearful eyes, told him his mother was very ill, and from that day there were no more rambles by the sea-shore, no more sittings under the ash-tree, no more listening to fairy tales and ancient legends; and as the first chill winds of November moaned through the forest and rustled among the falling leaves, the Lady of Courtelle was laid to rest in the quiet upland churchyard, and poor old Bridget was trying in vain to comfort the little orphan of six years old, who threw himself with passionate grief upon the new-made grave.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VOICES OF THE PAST.

TIME, and the buoyant spirits of childhood, at last calmed the wildness of Walter's sorrow. I must pass rapidly over the next six years. Bridget was a loving and watchful guardian, but an almost too careful one. Not only would she not allow Walter to associate with the children of the village, but she would not even allow him to attend the village school, so that he had not the advantage of what is generally called education ; but he was early trained to habits of perseverance and self-denial, courage and self-dependence ; he was taught the divine beauty of truth and justice ; his mind was stored with holy sayings, and his heart with devout aspirations. He was always ready to lighten the toils of his good old nurse, he brought the water from the well, and the wood from the forest ; and many a time when his little arms ached and he was tempted to throw down his burden, his father's

dying words would recur to his mind "My son, be strong, be strong," and though conscious as yet of no higher application of the words, he still felt them, half understood as they were, to be sufficient for his present need ; and nerved, as if for some high or heroic achievement, he walked cheerfully on, nor stopped again until he put down the pitcher or the bundle of faggots at the door of the little cottage, and was welcomed by old Bridget with "Bless the precious child, there isn't his like in the world ; I know there isn't."

The years passed on, and Walter was a fine strong boy of nearly twelve years old, when Bridget, who had been for a long time failing, grew rapidly worse, and it was evident her time on earth would be short indeed. Then she called Walter to her bed-side, and giving into his charge some valuable papers, which nothing was to tempt him to part with, she told him the mournful story of the past, told him of his birth and of the sad fate of his noble father ; but she told him too that there was hope, bright hope for the future. The aged monarch was so exasperated against the Baron of Courtelle that it was necessary to keep Walter's existence a secret ; the lands and titles had been forfeited to the Crown,

but had not been, as it was at first feared they would be, bestowed on any of the numerous favourites of the king ; and Walter's father and mother had hoped that, by their son being unknown and unheard of, he would be in the meantime unremembered, and they had always looked forward to the time when the king's eldest son, a prince of noble and amiable qualities, should ascend the throne and Walter be restored to the lands and titles of his father.

All this Bridget told him, but she warned him with solemn earnestness not to waste his youth in expectation—

“ To trust no future howe'er pleasant.”

She blamed herself for her overfearfulness, which had prevented him acquiring even the scanty learning the village school afforded, and she exhorted him, now that his childhood was fast passing away, to be up and doing, and to be ever pressing onwards. She advised him to go to the great city, where there is always employment to be found for willing hands and cheerful hearts ; she besought him to cultivate all kindly affections and noble purposes, and to strive as far as he could to fit himself for his future station, whatever that station might be.

A week after this, Walter sat alone in the deserted cottage. The new tenant was to come next day, and in the early morning, after a few kind words of parting from the sympathizing villagers to the sorrowing, and as they thought strange and wayward boy, and provided by them with some necessities, which he had never thought of, for the journey, he bade farewell to each well-remembered spot, and with a staff in his hand and a little bundle by his side he commenced his solitary journey to the great metropolis.

Walter walked steadily on, determined to be brave and manly, but still too busy with his own thoughts to take much interest in the scenes through which he passed—which, as the country was well known to him, had not the charm of novelty to arrest his attention.

Mile after mile was quickly passed, and about noon, feeling tired and hungry, he was glad to rest awhile beside a clear spring, and partake of some of the food with which the thoughtful kindness of his village friends had provided him. All at once the thought occurred to him to visit Courtelle; it was, he knew, but a few miles out of the direct route, and though his road thither would lead him

away from the village where he had intended to pass the night, he hoped to find some cottage in the neighbourhood where he might obtain a bed. The more Walter thought of it, the stronger became his desire to revisit the unremembered home of his infancy, and slinging his wallet on the end of his staff, he once more resumed his journey along the hot and dusty road. He had several times to ask his way; the long summer afternoon was fast drawing to a close, and he was beginning to fear he had undertaken more than his strength could accomplish, and that he would not be able to reach Courtelle that evening, when a sharp turn in the road brought him suddenly in view of the ancient castle, its heavy square towers and peaked turrets standing out in bold relief against a background of tall elms, with their rich dark foliage. With recovered energy Walter quickened his pace, and in less than half-an-hour had reached the castle terrace, when, sitting down on the steps of the wide gateway, he gazed on the varied extent of country spread out before him, and fell into a reverie, in which, with the bright hopefulness of youth, the mournful shadows of the past soon vanished before the brilliant visions of the future.

The lengthening shadows at last roused Walter from his day-dream, and warned him to depart. He arose quickly, and had just descended the steps, when he perceived a miserable-looking object leaning against the porch, and hitherto concealed from his view by a projecting buttress. She was nearly naked, and her shrunken and emaciated form told a sad tale of neglect and want, while she seemed almost as lifeless as the cold grey stones to which she clung with her long shrivelled arms.

On examining more closely, Walter saw that one of her limbs had been crushed against the wall by a large stone, hurled at her by careless or cruel hands. He removed the stone, and found the limb much injured, so much so indeed, that this, combined with her general ghastly appearance, would he feared preclude all hope of recovery ; he could not leave her, however, without doing something to relieve her sufferings, so he ran to a broken fountain he had observed in the garden and brought some water, which she drank eagerly, and having no more scientific surgical appliance at hand, he bound up the wounded limb with some soft wet moss. Walter felt grieved to be able to do no more, but what more could he do? So after

giving her another draught of water, he once more set off, in hopes of finding some gardener's or forester's cottage where he might obtain shelter for the night.

He sought, however, in vain ; every cottage was in ruins, the stones having apparently been removed for other buildings. No habitation was near, no creature to be seen, not a sound was heard, the very birds seemed to have been scared away from the desolate spot, and Walter, oppressed with the utter silence and solitude, determined to make one more effort and try, before night should quite overtake him, to gain the borders of the forest, where he felt sure he should meet with some woodman's hut or gipsy tent. With this view he quickly crossed the garden, but it seemed fated he was to make no progress, for just as he was passing through a gate which separated the lawn from the wilder part of the park, he again met with an interruption, and in the glimmering light he saw a figure lying on the road, directly across his path. To tell the truth, Walter's first impulse was to pass on ; the night was closing in and he was weary and footsore, but it was only for a moment the selfish thought prevailed ; he could not leave one appar-

ently more helpless than himself without giving what little aid was in his power, so putting down his staff and bundle he approached the prostrate figure and gently raised her from the ground.

He perceived her to be in the first bloom of youth ; and as he looked on her tall and slender form, and pale delicate beauty, he wondered what strange chance had brought one, evidently of such gentle nurture, to that lone spot. She was so weak she could hardly stand, and when he removed his supporting arms she sank again to the ground. He could not leave her thus, and he dared not linger long, so he placed her gently leaning against a young poplar, which grew beside the path ; itself a slight sapling, it was strong enough to sustain the fragile form that wound her arms round it for protection. Walter then cut a strong stick from a neighbouring thorn, which he gave her as an additional support in case of need ; and hoping some traveller might soon pass who would render her more substantial and lasting assistance, he bade farewell to the beautiful being who had so much interested him, while she waved him a grateful adieu.

No time was now to be lost, and Walter quickly

crossed the park and reached the furthest verge of the open ground, but seeing no human dwelling near, he felt his courage giving way, when the words which had so often cheered him before recurred to his mind, with the inspiriting confidence they always gave, "My son, be strong, be strong," and he walked boldly on, and entered the forest. But what other words are these whose soft tones come gently wafted from the far-off past, and waken the long-buried memories of his early fancies? "Ah, my boy, there are plenty of good fairies now." The words, long forgotten, recalled his happy childhood, his mother's watchful care. Oh! what would she say, could she see him now—alone, unfriended in the gathering darkness—the thought was too much; he was too weary and sick at heart to struggle longer, he felt his head growing giddy, and his limbs tottering, and with the despairing cry, "Oh, mother, mother!" he sank upon the ground.

CHAPTER V.

PRETTY FAIRIES FOR BESSIE.



WHEN Walter recovered from his swoon, he at first thought his mother had heard his wild appeal, and that he was lying as of old in her lap, with her guardian arms around him and his head pillowed on her breast, but as complete consciousness returned, he began to recollect all that had happened, and he tried to discover where he was. He could see nothing, for it was a moonless night, and not a ray of light entered the forest, but he felt he was lying on a soft couch, with his head resting on the most luxurious of pillows ; he seemed to be in the open air, but he felt no chill, for a thick screen or curtain shielded him from the night dews, invisible hands gently fanned his hot cheeks and parted his tangled locks, while the most delicious perfumes were flung around him, and a lullaby was sung by the sweetest voice he had ever heard. He felt as if on enchanted ground, and feared even to move,

lest he should break the spell ; so giving himself up to the soothing influences of the hour, he lay still and silent, listening to the glorious strains, now ringing clear and loud, now sinking into low murmurings of melody, till the last notes of the song sounded on his ear like the ripple of distant water, and he fell into profound repose.

The sun was high in the heavens when Walter awoke. He lay still for a few moments, wondering where he was, but suddenly all the adventures of the previous evening rushed on his memory, and starting up he looked anxiously around, hoping to see something, or somebody, who would unravel the mystery of his invisible attendants of the night before. Whoever they might have been, however, they were as invisible as ever, and on a careful survey of his situation, Walter felt sure that he must at last really have come within the influence of the fairies' transforming wand. Instead of being, as he imagined, in some enchanted palace, with perfumed fans waving over him and the breath of incense floating by, he found himself lying on soft moss at the foot of a giant oak, its spreading branches throwing a grateful shade around, and the fresh breeze of morning sighing among the whis-

pering leaves ; while in the cool recesses of the forest the spring flowers still lingered, primroses and wood-hyacinths growing side by side with wild myrtle and sweet scabious. It was indeed beautiful enough to be a scene of Fairyland, and though Walter felt rather disappointed that he could not see it peopled with bright little elves in their gossamer robes of varied green, he was not the less grateful for his hospitable reception the night before, and as he hoped to be able to leave the forest before evening, he took a hasty breakfast and once more proceeded on his journey.

Walter had walked on for many a weary mile, when he thought the trees became less thick, and he was rejoicing in the prospect of soon getting into the open country, when he suddenly experienced a feeling of suffocation. He turned deadly sick, and was obliged to lie down on the grass to recover himself. He then perceived the cause both of his sickness and of the fewer number of trees, and a very prosaic cause it was. The smaller trees had been cut down for the sake of the bark, which having been carried away, the charcoal-burners were now at work. It was then the fumes of the smouldering charcoal that had so oppressed him ;

this, while it destroyed the expectations that had been raised by the opener character of the wood, cheered him with the hope of falling in with the hut of the charcoal-burners, where he might find some one who would guide him out of the forest.

He was just rising to resume his walk, when he perceived, standing on the grass near him, a group of lovely little creatures, all dressed alike. They were not more than two inches high, and he could just see their heads peeping above the bright green leaves among which they nestled. He thought they looked at him, as if inviting him to carry them with him, he could not resist their gentle pleading look, and carefully raised them from the ground ; but as they lay still and smiling on his hand, he thought *that* too rough a resting-place for such fragile little beings, so gathering some of the leaves among which they had been hiding, he wrapped them around them as a mantle and placed them in his bosom. He soon found out, it was with no selfish object they had attracted his attention, but from motives of purest kindness to himself, for ever and anon, as the odour of the charcoal again stole over him with its sickening effect, the little creatures in his bosom wafted towards him a

perfume of such rare and exhilarating fragrance, that he felt instantly revived ; and thus the day wore on, till the summer evening faded into twilight, and night found him still in the forest.

Great then was Walter's joy when he saw a glimmering light, and looking closer, observed the dim outline of a rude hut. He joyfully hastened towards it, but as he approached near enough to hear the loud oaths and angry voices that issued from the half-open door, he shrank back appalled. He remembered his last night's peaceful lodging, and resolved rather to trust himself again to the spirits of the wood than seek the company of these worse than savages, who thus startled the quiet night with their wild cries. Presently Walter heard the sound of their heavy tread, as with whoops and yells they rushed out of the hut, and as their shouts grew louder and nearer, he feared they would overtake him, and in an instant, forgetting his fatigue, he fled with the swiftness of despair, nor stopped till, far out of hearing of the hideous noise, he leant against a tree to recover his breath and reflect on what was next to be done.

He had not been there many minutes when a

soft light shone around him, and looking forward in the direction whence it proceeded, he perceived a calm, majestic figure enveloped in a transparent veil of silvery white. Walter knew not, how or why, but in a moment he felt her magic influence, as thousands have done before and since ; his fears were soothed, his anxious heart was stilled, all vexing thoughts and unquiet fancies fled as he gazed upon her pure, cold beauty ; he felt sure she had come to help him, and when she gently withdrew her veil, and gathering it around her glided on in the full radiance of her unequalled loveliness, he felt that he could trustfully follow wherever she might lead—and his faith did not deceive him. He followed without fear as she guided him along a winding path, overhung with beetling crags, till she led him to an opening in the solid rock, when with a last parting smile, she wrapped a dark mantle round her lovely form, and vanished from his sight. Walter stood for a moment irresolute—dare he venture in ? The scene at the charcoal-burners' hut had made him suspicious, but quickly shaking off his doubts as he felt sure that pure being could not deceive him, he pushed aside the honeysuckle that nearly concealed the opening, and entering the

narrow doorway found himself in a cave of considerable size, with a low vaulted roof. The cave had been comfortably prepared for his reception, and was thickly carpeted with last year's leaves, which the winter wind had brought and the summer breeze had dried ; and though Walter did not feel in such fairy land as he had done the night before, and wished his present hosts had given him a rather warmer reception, still he was thankful that his second day had come to such a happy termination, and was determined that no forebodings for the morrow should mar the pleasure of the present hour. Walter then unfastened his wallet, and dividing his small stock of bread into two portions, he put aside one for the morning, and with the other, contented and happy, he made his frugal supper.

Then, and not till then, he remembered the sweet sisters who had cheered him in his sickness, and he put his hand eagerly into his bosom to draw them forth and thank them for all their kindness—but alas ! they were gone ; and he remembered with a feeling of remorse that he had heard something fall during his hurried flight, but, too much preoccupied with his own personal fears, he had not cast a thought upon the little timid creatures,

who had left their quiet nest among the sheltering leaves to comfort him in his hour of lonely trouble. Forgotten and neglected, as soon as their gentle ministry was no longer needed, they had been left to perish by the rough way-side ; but say not that they lived in vain. There are not many, among all the race of boastful man, upon whose sculptured tombs we could inscribe the simple epitaph, these little beings carry with them to their unknown graves—

They lived to cheer the sorrowing heart,
And died having fulfilled their mission.

As Walter lay on his bed of leaves the scenes of the last few days flitted in rapid succession before him, and when he fell asleep he dreamed that the little fairy sisters were lying helpless upon the rocky path, and the step of the fierce charcoal-burner, that was to crush them to the earth, was coming nearer and nearer, when a child-girl, beautiful as day, with locks of palest gold, came floating down from the sky, on the calm majestic being's silvery veil, and lifted them from the ground. She tried every gentle art to raise their drooping heads and call back the waning life, but seeing her tender care was all in vain, she kissed them.

with a soft warm kiss and wept upon them tears of pity ; and when, withered and faded, she laid them gently down, she found, that grateful even in death, they had left their perfume on her rosy lips, and their colour living for ever in her violet eyes.

If Walter thought the owners of the grotto rather chary of their attendance at night, he had no cause of complaint in the morning, for just as day began to break he heard such a twittering and chattering, that tired as he still was, most effectually banished sleep. He was rather provoked at being so early disturbed, but as the chattering got louder and more shrill, he was glad to get up and escape into the open air. Then indeed he saw what he would have missed had he remained in the grotto, and he thanked his chattering friends for their kind cruelty, in driving him forth to enjoy such pleasure.

He stood on a grassy knoll, with the first beams of the sun sparkling on the dew-drops and waking up the little blushing daisies, always the first to welcome his return, while invisible singers, in strains of exquisite melody, hymned his praise, and as the notes died away on Walter's listening ear, from all the groves around rose the loud chorus of gratitude and joy.

Walter could have looked and listened all the day ; but soon the fairies of the early morn retired before the coming day, the groves were silent, the dew-drops gone, and the little blushing daisies alone remained, now wide awake and looking at him with their starry eyes.

Walter determined to delay no longer, as it was now most necessary, with his nearly empty wallet, that he should quit the forest as soon as possible and reach the public road, where he doubted not he should find some carrier's cart or empty waggon in which, for a few shillings, he might continue his journey to the great city.

With these thoughts he hastened back to the cave for his wallet, but what was his surprise to find that at a few yards' distance from the entrance, and on the side opposite to the path leading to the grove, some kind hands had, with true artistic taste, arranged a most luxurious repast. They seemed to know he had the substantials at command, and no hot buttered rolls, or greasy ham, poisoned the pure morning air with their rank breath, but all the elegancies of a summer breakfast were there spread out before him—the Alpine strawberry in its nest of leaves ; the fragrant raspberry, not piled up in a

heavy pyramid, with the stalks inside, but left in tempting freshness on the graceful branch ; the small black luscious cherry, newly gathered, and lying on the grass in rich abundance ; and the little purple bleaberry, scarcely noticed among its more showy companions. Walter had never enjoyed any thing so much, and ashamed of his complaints of the previous evening, he made up his mind, when next he paid a visit to friend or fairy, not to make remarks on the beginning till he had seen the end, nor acquire the character, politely ascribed to fools and women,—of judging of things half done.

The repast over, Walter set off with fresh vigour on his unknown path. In a couple of hours he had cleared the wood and reached a wide moor, where he looked in vain for a beaten track or for any one to direct his steps. Once, indeed, he saw a tall figure, with outstretched arms, standing on a heap of stones, and who, he thought, could have come there with no other object than to guide the weary traveller on his way ; but though Walter felt certain he must often have spoken to others, he was dumb to him.

The day was oppressively hot, the rough ground hurt his feet, and he missed the soft turf and

refreshing shade of the forest ; he wandered on and on, till at last he became quite bewildered, and was afraid either to go on or to turn back, both seeming equally hopeless, when he heard a merry laugh at some distance before him, and running hastily in the direction whence the sound proceeded, he found himself at the bottom of a deep dell, and in the presence of the most beautiful creature that mortal eyes ever beheld.

She was indeed a "Phantom of delight" as she lay on the green sward, with her shining robes and crown of water lilies, laughing gaily with the rays of the noontide sun, which, fierce and scorching to all beside, grew soft and harmless as they stopped to play with her. She was good and kind too, as well as beautiful, and perceiving Walter's tired and wayworn look, she gently tripped up to where he stood, offered water to his parched lips, and tenderly bathed his swollen feet. Everything and everybody seemed to love her ; the deer left their rich pastures to gaze upon her beauty, the grass grew greener at her approach, and the very trees stooped down to kiss her as she passed along. It seemed impossible for her to be quiet for long together, and Walter thought he had never heard

music so enchanting as the sound of her silvery laugh, as she played with the flowers upon the sunny bank, or rested awhile in the shade to weave a fresh crown of lilies.

Presently she grew tired of such a quiet life, and throwing away the lilies she ran swiftly onwards. "Why should I not follow her," said Walter to himself, "and make her my fairy guide? Why should I not trust her, as I did the lovely being in the forest; she will, I am sure, lead me where I shall be once more cheered by the murmur of human voices, for is she not too beneficent to keep her treasures to herself, and too lavish in dispensing her priceless gifts to withhold them where they are most needed—among the crowded haunts of busy men?"

Walter ran quickly back for his staff and bundle, which he had left on the bank, but even in that moment she was out of sight; he was not, however, afraid of losing her, for she called for him to follow, with her clear glad voice, and when he overtook her she was in the wildest spirits, dancing on the rocks and playing hide-and-seek in all sorts of little creeks and corners. Even with the assistance of his staff Walter had no small difficulty in follow-

ing where she led, and as insensible to fatigue she ran swiftly on, and bounded from rock to rock, she became bolder and more gay, till, with a joyous shout and a merry mocking laugh, she took a wild leap where he dared not follow, and he saw her no more for ever.

And had she then proved a treacherous guide, and lured him on only to deceive?

Ah no ! even as he stood there, listening to the dying echoes of her silvery tones, there rose on his ear the voice of cheerful labour, the hum of daily life. In a few moments he was standing before the little village inn, where he found a carrier's cart just starting ; he made a bargain with the man, and was soon comfortably ensconced among the boxes, and jogging quietly on to that great city which was now the centre of all his hopes.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FAIRIES OF ART—GOOD FAIRIES FOR ANNIE.



ALTER had undergone so much fatigue, anxiety and excitement during the last few days, that now he was comparatively at rest, he felt both tired and sleepy, but he thought it would not be exactly polite to go to sleep, as his companion might wish to indulge in a little conversation ; the carrier was however too much absorbed in his pipe to take any notice of Walter, except once, when he turned round to say interrogatively, "Pretty comfortable?" and, on Walter's expressing himself as particularly pleased with his accommodation, he gave a gratified and assenting nod, and with another "Ay, pretty comfortable," this time affirmatively, he again betook himself to his pipe, and his young companion, seeing no further conversation was intended, was soon fast asleep.

It was nearly dark, when Walter felt a strong hand on his shoulder and heard a good-humoured hearty voice saying, "Hilloa, young'un, don't you want any supper?" Now the "*young'un*" wanted some supper very much, so he quickly jumped out of the cart, and followed the carrier into the little kitchen of the road-side inn.

"Got any money to pay for it?" said the carrier, as Walter sat down to the table, and began helping himself to a great slice of cold beef. "Oh yes," replied he with some pride—really thinking his stock, consisting of seven shillings, and a golden guinea sewn up in his pocket, quite inexhaustible, "Oh yes; I've got plenty of money."

"Sorry to hear it," said the carrier; "hope you havn't run away;" but, seeing the hot blood rush over Walter's face, and hearing the loud indignant "No indeed," he quickly added, "Well, well, never mind, running away or staying at home, lads always want their supper, so get along, you havn't much time;" and Walter, thinking he had better do as he was bid, got along accordingly, by sitting still and helping himself to another slice of beef, resolving to tell the carrier how unjust were his suspicions when they got back to the cart.

The carrier, however, was decidedly unargumentative, and did not encourage conversation, so he settled himself to his pipe, and Walter was left to his own thoughts.

Next morning, they stopped again for breakfast, and it was towards evening when the smoke and noise and traffic gave notice they were approaching the city. The carrier turned to Walter and said, "I say, lad, where are you going to get down?"

The question came upon him by surprise. He was only a boy—he had not thought of it before, so he could only stammer out—"I—don't—know."

"Don't know," said the carrier, and the runaway suspicion again crossed his mind; "you'll have to find out somehow, for I shall have to put up the cart directly in master's yard; 'taint mine, I'm only the man."

Walter had by this time recovered himself, and explained that he was an orphan, going to seek his fortune, that though he had a little money he wished to save it in case of greater need, that he was anxious immediately to get some employment, however humble, and he concluded by asking the carrier to recommend him to some decent lodging for the night.

Whether honest John entirely believed his story or not, it would be hard to say, but he was a quiet man, and afraid of evoking the indignant protests of the night before, so he merely said—

“No, I don’t know of a lodging ; great towns are bad places ; you’d better come home with me first, and I’ll think it over ; and, I say, take it easy if the missus scolds, she’ll be quite right if she do ; what business have I bringing home young run—now you be quiet,” interrupting Walter’s vehement expression of thanks, “the streets are getting crowded, and I must mind my horse.”

A little while after, the cart was driven into the great yard, where at least fifty other carts were also waiting, the way-bill was given to the clerk, and Walter and the carrier went homewards, walking quickly, as the day, which had been damp and chilly, was closing in with a cold drizzling rain.

In one of the narrowest and dirtiest of suburban streets stood the carrier’s house, its bright windows and clean muslin blinds gleaming amidst the surrounding dinginess. He was evidently expected, and warmly welcomed by wife and children, though the former did as he expected “scold a bit” at the sight of his companion, while John feeling rather

ashamed of his own kindness, acted on the advice he had given Walter, and "took it easy," filling up all pauses in his wife's harangue by praising the tea, the toast, the fire, and though last, not least, the baby, and certainly if he had *not* praised them he would have been hard to please.

After tea, the carrier began to talk of Walter's plans, and ended by saying, "To tell the truth, wife, I pitied the lad ; that's why I brought him home, *I* could'nt help him anyway you know."

Nothing mollified by the implied compliment, his wife began—"How can I find work for him, as if the town wasn't already choke full of idle lads, all waiting for something to do——."

"Mother, Jim Page has broke his arm," interrupted the quiet voice of Jane, the eldest girl, as she sat nursing the baby by the fire.

This remark did not seem to have much connection with the previous conversation, but the mother brightened up directly at the prospect it opened up to her, and explained in a few words that Jim Page used to sweep out the printing house of the rich Mr. Phillips, but as he had broken his arm of course some one would be required to supply his place in the meantime. It

would therefore be a good opening for Walter, and the carrier promised to go with him in the morning to apply for the vacant situation.

"And then," said the carrier's wife, "the lad can lodge at Dick Price's ; he can give a shilling or two a week, and that will be a great help to them, poor things, so that will be a good plan."

Now the carrier, having had all his own way as yet, and being master of the field, should have stopped here ; and as the question as to where Walter was to lodge was not pressing, for that night at least, he should not again have entered the lists, but men, and women too, very seldom *do* know when to stop, so he replied—

"A good plan, ay, a good plan for them, but not for the boy. Dick Price is a bad man, and so is his son ; the boy's a good boy, and we mustn't put him where he'll learn bad ways."

"I declare, John," replied his wife, "you'd make out all boys are good."

"So they are, till grown folks spoil 'em," replied John ; and his wife was going to make an angry rejoinder, when Jane, from the chimney-corner launched another of her unconnected remarks upon the sea of strife.

"Mother, the new Town Hall is finished, and the mayor is going to open it to-morrow."

"Well, I declare Jane," said her mother, once more brightening up, "you've more sense than the whole lot of us;" and then she again explained that Widow Brown's lodger, the nice young plasterer who had been working at the new Town Hall, was only waiting till it was finished to go to another job in the country. The carrier thought Widow Brown unexceptionable, and so the matter was settled.

Next morning Walter rose betimes, and accompanied by the carrier made his way to the printing house of Mr. Phillips, where, after a brief interview with the manager, he was duly installed as sweeper and occasional messenger to the establishment.

In the evening, John took him to Widow Brown's, where, after all the necessary arrangements were made, he bade him a kind farewell, and Walter was left with the rudder in his own hands, to guide his bark across the rough sea of life.

Walter liked his occupation very well; he was always busy, and that made him happy, but he felt his evenings very dull. Old Widow Brown was kind and motherly, but very deaf, and there was a want of *something* about the house he could not

exactly tell what—nothing ever looked bright or cheerful, and he was glad when it was time to go to bed. In the country Walter had never felt the want of companions, but here he often longed for some one to talk to, and he looked with envious eyes on some boys in the printing house, a little older than himself, as they were amusing themselves with some little black elves who lived in the great room up stairs ; he determined that he too would make the acquaintance of these little black elves, and was wondering how he was to accomplish it, when one day the manager called him up stairs and desired him to clear away a quantity of waste paper, etc., that was lying about the room. Walter proceeded accordingly to clear away, when he perceived the little black elves, standing together upon a large sheet of paper, that had been pointed out among the rubbish ; he thought this must be a mistake, and called the manager's attention to it, but he merely said, "O yes, I see, but I don't want them now ; take them away." In a transport of joy Walter folded up the paper, little elves and all, and put them carefully away in a corner till the evening, when he took them home. He was quite fidgety all the time of tea, and as soon as it was over

he unfolded the paper, resolved not to lose a moment's time in making the acquaintance of the little elves. He found them rather shy at first, but as they turned out to be old acquaintances of Widow Brown, she did the honours of the introduction, and Walter was soon on pretty good terms with them.

Every evening Walter and the little elves had long conversations ; they were still rather shy, and at first always stood in a row together, by degrees they became more familiar and would come and speak to him by twos and threes at a time, till at last they were quite at home with him, and came and went singly or in numbers just as he pleased. Then they became communicative, and told him long stories, sometimes grave, sometimes funny ; Widow Brown's deafness, and the cheerless room, all were forgotten, so absorbed was Walter in the society of his new friends.

At last Jim Page's arm got well, and he was reinstated in his office ; but Walter had conducted himself so much to the manager's satisfaction, and been always so regular in his duties, that he was not turned adrift, but kept on in a somewhat similar capacity, in another and larger establishment of Mr. Phillips', of which the printing house was but the feeder.

Walter's new duty was in a long and narrow room, piled with books from floor to ceiling, while books filled every vacant corner ; he had to keep them dusted and in order, and in his spare time to employ himself as a messenger. Here he first saw his master, Mr. Phillips, and though the great merchant prince passed the little errand boy unheeded by, Walter felt attracted to him at once by the benevolence of his expression and the courteous kindness of his manner to others.

A year passed by, a happy year to Walter, for he felt he was doing his duty and enjoyed the confidence of the manager, who often intrusted him with work which properly belonged to a higher department. The only drawback to his happiness was the dreariness of Widow Brown's little room, but he always took refuge with the little black elves who quickly chased away all feelings of dulness.

At last, however, the said little elves took a learned fit, and became scientific in their conversation sometimes even speaking in unknown tongues, and Walter could not follow them. He wished much to get some one to help him to understand them, but as he was engaged all the day he did not know how to manage it, when he bethought him that perhaps the

carrier might know some one who would devote an hour or two in the evening to his guidance through the labyrinth he could not tread alone, and with this object in view he set off one evening to the carrier's.

Honest John, of course, referred the matter to his wife, who "wondered how *she* could be expected to find guides and teachers for all the young upstarts who had notions above their station—able to pay for it? Yes, she dare say he was, but it wasn't very likely there were any people who would give up their evenings for a shilling or two a week;" and she was proceeding in this strain, getting more and more angry, as she really felt her inability to help, when Jane's quiet tones were heard from the chimney-corner.

"Mother, there's very good darning cotton at the new shop at the corner, for a penny a skein."

"That girl thinks of everything," exclaimed the delighted mother, with a sudden smoothing of the wrinkled forehead; "how could I be so stupid as to forget—there's Mr. Fenton, the young curate I wash for, John, a nice quiet gentleman as ever lived, but very poor I think; his stockings *do* want darning *to* be sure, I daresay he'd be glad; I'll speak to him to-morrow when I take home his clothes."

The carrier's wife was as good as her word, and

having communicated to Walter that Mr. Fenton was "quite agreeable," the matter was settled.

Mr. Fenton was delighted with his apt pupil, and Walter with his patient teacher, under whose guidance all difficulties vanished, and by whom he was gradually introduced to all those fairies of art and science, to whom the little black elves stand in the relation of masters of the ceremonies.

There were those twin sisters, different and yet alike, who touched his eyes with their magic wands, and in an instant the scales of ignorance and presumption fell off, and he saw the heavens blazing with ten thousand suns, and earth and air, each flower and each blade of grass, teeming with unimagined life. There was that mighty giant, whose throne is in our own land, but whose iron sceptre stretches over all the earth, whose ships, laughing at wind and tide, traverse the wide ocean, bearing wealth and knowledge to the remotest shores, whose chariots, spurning all obstacles, rush through the solid mountain with the swiftness of the wind and the noise of distant thunder.

There was that mysterious being, whose power is felt in earth and sky, who with one hand guides navies across the pathless sea, and with the other,

annihilating time and space, unites all nations with an invisible band of brotherhood, by which they interchange their thoughts with the speed and silence of the lightning's flash.

There were those bright sprites at whose fairy touch darkness vanishes in an instant, who long languished in silence and obscurity, their power unheeded or unknown, but, once recognized, they leapt at a bound to light and fame, and are now valued inmates in every dwelling in the land, from the lordliest castle to the lowliest hut.

There were those fairies of the magic wands who bend all things to their will, who with ease can change the impetuous wind into softest music, and the most harmless and quiescent of inanimate substances into a resistless and dangerous force, whose influence nothing can withstand—the greatest and the meanest own their sway ; who can transform at will the sun's brightest rays and the beggar's most wretched rags. But I cannot stop to describe them all now, the little black elves will introduce you to them, if you like, and to them I must refer you for all information.

Another happy year passed on, when one day, in October, there were grave faces at the office. Mr.

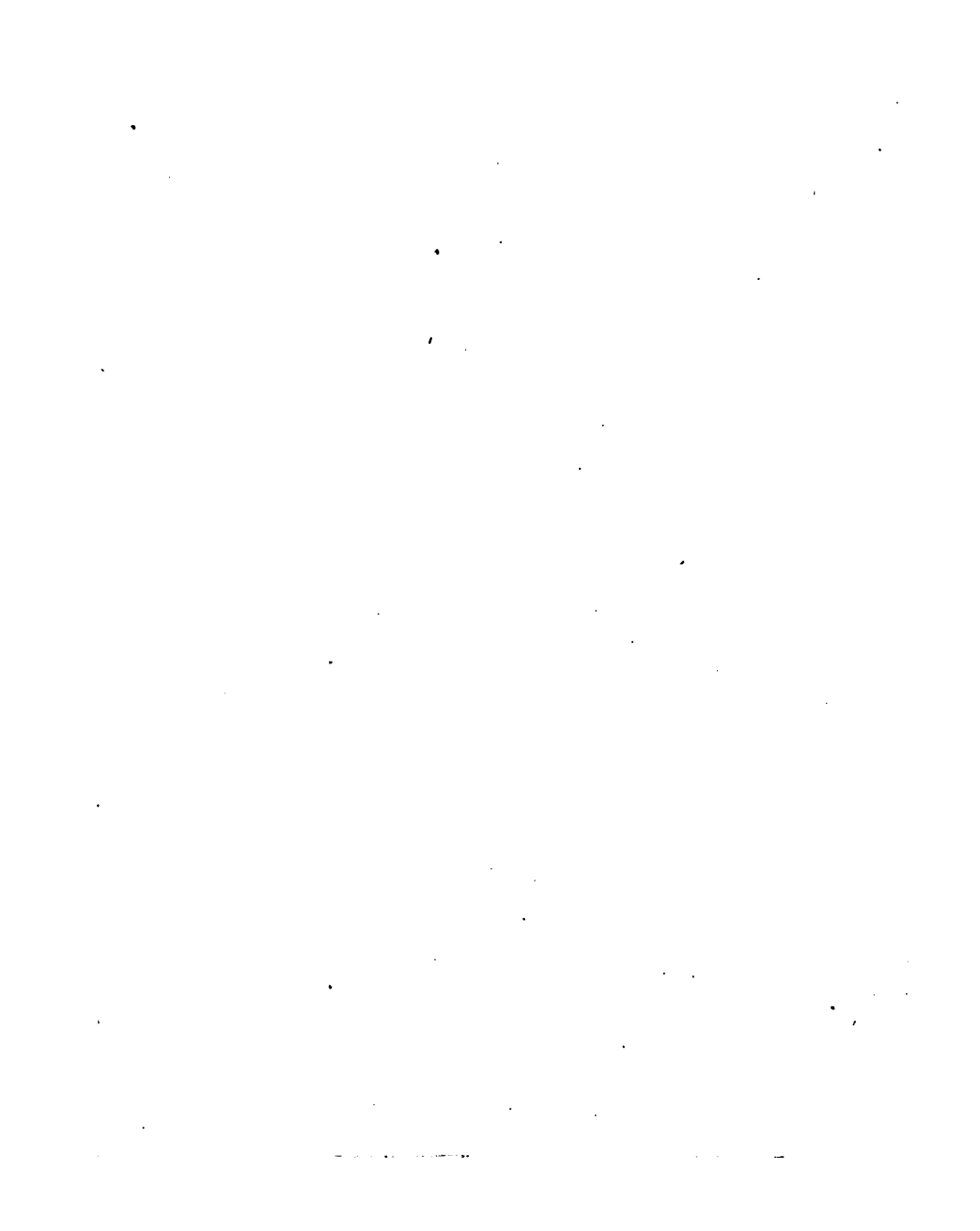
Phillips had met with a severe accident, from which the worst results were apprehended ; after a time, however, the danger passed away, but he was confined to the sofa for many weeks. When he was well enough to attend to business, Walter used to be sent to his house every morning, with books and manuscripts for his perusal, and return for answers in the evening. When Walter arrived before Mr. Phillips was ready, he used to be shown into the study, and in this way he first became personally acquainted with his master.

Mr. Phillips was astonished at Walter's intelligent answers and quick perceptions, and felt much interested when he heard his story, which Walter frankly told, always excepting the one grand secret of his life. Mr. Phillips augured great things for Walter's future career, from the steady perseverance and unwearying diligence, which, in two short years, had overcome all the defects of his earlier education, and finding he was quite competent for a clerk's situation, he wrote to the manager to appoint him to the first vacant desk ; nor did his kindness stop here, for after having made due inquiries from the carrier, Mr. Fenton, and Widow Brown, he told Walter that he thought he could

soon find him a more congenial home with a widow lady, who would receive him into her house as a personal favour to himself.

Walter was in ecstasies, but as the time approached for leaving old Widow Brown he could not part without regret from one from whom he had received so much substantial kindness; on her part, she was as sorry to say good-bye to him, and made him promise to come and see her as often as he could.

It was arranged that Walter was to continue his visits to Mr. Fenton, but as Mr. Phillips wished him to breakfast at the office, and Mr. Fenton's house was on the road thither, he was to go to him in the early morning instead of in the evening. Mr. Phillips was not yet able to leave the house, and could not therefore, as he had intended, go with Walter to Mrs. Temple's; but he told him she was quite prepared to receive him, and on the appointed day Walter found himself sitting in a small cheerful parlour, in a quiet old-fashioned street, where the rage for improvement had not yet appeared, and awaiting with a beating heart the entrance of the lady who was to be the guardian of his future home.





HOUSEHOLD FAIRIES AT WORK

CHAPTER VII.

THE FAIRIES OF HOME—USEFUL FAIRIES FOR MARGARET.



ALTER had scarcely time to take a rapid survey of the apartment when the door opened and there entered—the child-girl of his forest dream, with locks of palest gold, who had soothed the last moments of the little fairy sisters and gathered up the treasures he had thrown away. He was so amazed, he hardly heard a word she said, as she told him her mama had gone out but would soon be back, and then with her cheerful voice tried all sorts of topics to lead the stranger into conversation.

Walter had often longed for a companion about his own age, but now that for the first time in his life he had found one, he felt that his long habits of silence and solitude must make him appear very reserved, if not stupid, to the bright little girl, who was doing her best to chase away his shyness.

No one, however, could long withstand the contagion of Amy's merry voice and laughing eyes, (*too* laughing but for the shadow of the violet, which always lingered there), and before Mrs. Temple returned he was talking gaily and quite at his ease.

In his new home Walter felt he had all he could desire. Amy was the merriest and kindest of little sisters, and Mrs. Temple he soon learned to look upon as a mother. He thought she must naturally have been of as gay a disposition as her little daughter, but the shadow of some deep grief seemed to have settled on her life and left a tinge of sadness, even on her happiest hours. Amy confided to Walter that Mr. Phillips was a "very old friend of mama's, and would give mama plenty of money, but she liked to do something for herself, so went out to teach nearly all day, and that was why they lived in town, as there was no one to teach in the country."

Walter wondered, as Mrs. Temple was so much from home, how Amy had got her own education, for very well educated he thought she was. She was not particularly learned, but she had a vast amount of common sense, a great stock of what is called general information, and could play tolerably, while

her repertoire of songs was inexhaustible. She, like Walter, had had no companions, for Mr. Phillips' daughter, who, though a few years older than Amy, would have been delighted to be her friend, had been from childhood so delicate that she was seldom able to leave the house; but Amy felt no want, for had she not a host of old women, for whom she was always making caps, and no end of little children, for whom she was always making frocks? Indeed, she was insatiable in that respect, and ever so ready to extend her visiting list, that she hailed the addition of old Widow Brown and the carrier's baby with immense delight.

Amy knew little of the country; the book of Nature was almost a sealed book to her, and she was never tired of hearing Walter's stories of the forest fairies. Do not think, however, that she had no fairy fancies, and no fairy attendants. Green fields and running waters were to her but as beautiful visions—dreams of hope, but the fairies of home followed her wherever she went, and with their transforming wand turned the dull prose of every-day work into the ever-living poetry of life.

Who could live in the house, and not know and love the Fairy Dustina?—the bright, active, untiring

Dustina, who carried cheerfulness wherever she went. Walter for the first time knew what it was that threw such a charm around his new home and which had been wanting in his old one, and would often say with a smile, "Oh, Amy ! I wish that busy little Dustina would pay a visit to old Widow Brown !"

Walter always called her that "busy *little* Dustina," but what made him imagine she was little I am sure I do not know, for of one thing I am certain—he never saw her. Perhaps from early associations of the "little busy bee" he joined the two adjectives together, and do we not all do the same ? We all talk of a busy little creature, no one ever heard of a busy great creature. Well, whether Dustina was little or big, Walter did not know, for, as I said before, he had never seen her. Truth to tell, she was not very pretty to look upon, perhaps that was the reason she always did her work in the early morning before he was up. If we are to judge her, however, by the old nursery adage of "Handsome is that handsome does," then Dustina was "beautiful exceedingly ;" everything she touched seemed to brighten beneath her fairy fingers or her flying feet. She it was who renewed

the carpets, and freshened the paper, and rubbed up the tables, and revarnished the pictures, and polished the mirrors, and brightened the windows, and regilded the books, and if she were absent for only a few days, they mourned in Eastern fashion, and sprinkled themselves with dust. She never was absent, however, unless Amy were absent too, for they were inseparable companions.

Another of the household fairies, who was Amy's close attendant, was the quiet, demure-looking Broma. Unlike Dustina, who divided her energies on everything that came within her reach, Broma confined hers to one object ; she did not do much, but what she did she did well, and though she was seldom thought of, as she stood silent and neglected in her little corner, no one would have been more missed, if she had been absent from her post when her services were required. Broma was not pretty, having nothing remarkable about her but her hair, which was long and fine. She usually dressed in black, though on some very grand occasions she appeared in scarlet and gold. However quiet Broma might have been all day, she always began to bestir herself towards evening, for she had a friend, who came regularly to tea, and she was very

busy for some time before, preparing a place for him, and making everything bright and cheerful to await his arrival.

Now this friend of Broma's was jet black, and as unlike her as possible, for while she was tall and thin, he was short and fat, while she was always silent, he was always singing, and while she was quiet and unobtrusive, he was always making a noise and trying to attract attention. He was the jolliest little "nigger" imaginable, and though he always sang the same song, it was such a capital one that no one was ever tired of listening to it. He was a very fussy little fellow withal, and liked notice, and if he thought his song was not attended to, he would begin to splutter, and fret, and fume, till his fat little body nearly lost its equilibrium, and some one was obliged to rush forward and save him from falling. Sometimes our little fat friend took a sulky fit, and would not sing, but to do him justice that was only when Broma had neglected to get his place ready for him. This happened on those rare occasions when she forgot to look at the clock, and did not know how late it was, while he never forgot the tea hour, and was always punctual to a minute. Broma was in despair when she saw

him sulky, and knowing it was her own fault, she would make all the amends in her power, and first begging his pardon, by a low *sweeping* curtsey, she would *brush* past him in her haste to put tidy, and soon succeeded in getting everything comfortable and in order, when he would immediately become quite merry and musical, and pour out his very heart in song.

Amy, though very fond of Walter's little black elves, had some sharp-eyed, delicate little friends of her own, with whom she used often to pass a happy evening, and the only subject on which she and Walter disagreed, was the attention she paid to these little creatures, for he could not be induced to acknowledge either their beauty or their usefulness. Amy praised their exquisite polish, their delicate shape, the fineness of their temper, and the beauty of their eyes, while Walter said, that far from being polished, they were very rough if treated with the least inattention or neglect, their delicate shape and their fine temper must be reserved for Amy alone, for when *he* touched them they bent their backs at him, like an angry cat, and did nothing but scratch, and as to their eyes—he took her word for it that they did possess such appendages, but

he should have doubted the fact on his own personal knowledge, as when *he* looked at them they shut them up altogether.

At last Amy, to please Walter, consented to banish her little favourites from the family circle for a month, and to devote all her attention to his black elves, but agreeing with him that they did not stand neglect, and knowing that the damp of this variable climate was exceedingly prejudicial to their tender constitutions, she carefully wrapped them up in silk and flannel, before leaving them for a month to darkness and repose.

All went on well for the first week, at the end of which time Amy observed that on going to the office Walter kept one hand in his pocket, to avoid exposing the points of his fingers to the curious gaze of the passers-by ; a few days more, and both hands were in his pockets ; at the end of the second week, he limped very much as he walked, which she shrewdly suspected to arise from his foot being on terms of too great familiarity with his boot ; he also wore a very thick coat, on a fine warm morning, rendered necessary by a little rent in a more appropriate garment ; and one day refused to take his umbrella though it was pouring with rain, which

unusual obstinacy Amy afterwards discovered to have been caused by the silk and the spokes having had a violent rupture, and parted company.

But at the end of the third week matters came to a crisis. Amy could stand it no longer, when one evening she observed Walter sitting in a most uneasy and uncomfortable attitude, and when she perceived on closer inspection, that from the want of one of her bright-eyed little fairies, to establish amicable relations between the button and the collar, he had been obliged to call in the aid of a cousin of Amy's little friends, a thick-headed creature, who was always poking and thrusting herself into society, where she was so much out of place, that she was forced to conceal herself as much as possible from observation ; and who, from her forward and untidy habits, Amy disliked as much as it was in her nature to dislike any one. When, therefore, she saw this pert, vulgar little thing intruding herself where she had no business to be, and pretending all the time she was doing good, when in fact she was doing a great deal of mischief, which it would take her cousins a long time to repair, she felt it was time for her to interfere, and restore her banished friends to their proper place in

the family circle ; so while Walter with a very conscious look steadily kept his eyes fixed in an opposite direction, Amy went quietly to her little favourites' prison, and released them from their enforced confinement.

Delighted to be once more free, they required no inducement to be busy, and undismayed by the arrears of work before them, they first examined it with a piercing glance, and then threaded their way through every difficulty in their own straightforward and pointed manner, in short, they set to work so quickly, and worked with such good-will, that by the next morning Walter took his hands out of his pockets and paraded his gloved hands in the face of day, left off his thick coat, and took to his thin one, which he examined all over with wondering and approving eyes, while the foot and the boot no longer approached each other with that undue familiarity which had so shocked and pained him, the button and the collar vowed a constant attachment, and as to the umbrella, it seemed to him to have absolutely renewed its youth, as he saw the silk and the spokes united in indissoluble friendship.

Amy had plenty of other fairy attendants, but I have no time to enumerate them all, and if you try,

you can find them out for yourselves. Sometimes, with other people, I have known these household fairies get troublesome, and take too much upon them, when they become perfect pests, for though excellent servants, they are very bad masters ; but with Amy, they all kept to their own proper sphere, under the influence of two potent watchwords TIME and PLACE.

Walter spent four happy years at Mrs. Temple's, during which time he had been promoted step by step, till he was now one of the principal clerks, continuing all the time to lay in fresh stores of knowledge at his daily visits to Mr. Fenton, whom he loved as a brother ; while Amy kept her light step, and her merry laugh, augmented her stock of general information, added to her repertoire of songs, and increased her visiting-list by the addition of more old women and little children, for whom were to be made fresh stores of snowy caps and plain blue-spotted frocks.

Walter was so happy, his life glided on so smoothly, that he had never thought of a change, when the news came upon him like a thunderbolt that his present home was to be broken up. Mr. Phillips' daughter had been for some time getting

gradually worse, and was ordered to try the effects of a warmer climate ; he could not go with her himself, so had asked Mrs. Temple to undertake the anxious charge ; she, ever ready to show her gratitude to her benefactor, had consented, and in a few days she and Amy were to leave their quiet home and go forth on their ministry of love.

Mr. Phillips, whose active benevolence overlooked no one, and who felt that Walter would be the one to suffer most from the change, had with thoughtful kindness provided a new home for him. He was to live with Mr. Phillips himself, and while continuing his duties as a clerk, to act also as his private secretary.

When the sad news of Mrs. Temple's departure was first made known, theirs was a sorrowing household, and everything went wrong. Mrs. Temple was melancholy, Walter in bitter grief, the old women sighed, the children cried, Broma tore her hair, Dustina rent her clothes, and nearly cut herself to pieces against the scraper, while the jolly little "nigger" was found lying on the hearth-rug, nearly drowned in tears.

Amy, however, soon put all to rights, for though busy, she was not confused, and though often in a

hurry, she was never in a bustle. With the aid of some of her attendant fairies, she not only managed all the packing, but found time to help her mother, comfort Walter, say good-bye to all the old women, kiss all the little children, and even to smooth Broma's dishevelled hair, *fold* Dustina's *mangled* form in a close embrace, and coax the jolly little "nigger" to give them a farewell song.

At length the day of parting came, the last adieux were said, and as Walter got a farewell glimpse of Amy's golden hair and waving hand, he felt as if his youth had vanished with her, and the brightness had gone out of his life for ever.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DREAM FULFILLED.



MUST pass over some years—years how long when they are still future ! how short when they are passed ! Walter heard often of Amy and her mother from Mr. Phillips ; their return had been postponed from time to time, as the southern land was doing such wonders for the invalid, they feared to quit it too soon ; but now she seemed quite recovered, and they were coming home. Walter was in a fever of joyful expectation, not unmingled with fear, for would they be to him the same as ever ? The years that to him had been so quiet and uneventful, would they have changed Amy ? He had not her glad trustfulness of disposition, and could not help even his brightest hopes being shadowed by a doubt.

One day as Walter was musing, rather sadly, an event occurred which altered all his plans and changed the whole current of his future life. When

I was speaking of the fairies of art, I forgot to mention one, who far from meriting such neglect, deserved a whole chapter to himself, so important a part does he play in the affairs of men. He was very tall, and extremely thin, and every day at a certain hour he paid a visit to Mr. Phillips' office. They never could exactly make out his name, he having so many *aliases*, it would have puzzled the best detective to discover the right one, so they generally called him the Daily Messenger ; he was a great master of etiquette, and always paid his respects first to Mr. Phillips or the manager, and then made the tour of the room. He was warmly welcomed by all, for he was very well read and possessed a great amount of information, which he was always ready to communicate ; indeed, he came for the express purpose of telling the news. He was a great politician and theologian, and always seemed to know what the Prime Minister or the Archbishop were doing better than they did themselves. He was an arrant gossip too, and whenever he had not more important intelligence to communicate, he would wile away an hour most pleasantly with all sorts of interesting stories and amusing anecdotes. There *were* people, indeed,

who said his information was not always correct, nor were his anecdotes always to be depended upon, but this I think was a base calumny, for did he not back every statement by a reference to papers? and we all know that anything we read in papers *must* be true; and then the grumblers were generally old people, who were always praising the days of their youth, and abusing the present "*Times*."

Besides the general news the messenger always brought for all, he sometimes had special messages for individuals, and often was the bearer of glad or sorrowful tidings to one or other of the clerks assembled in Mr. Phillips' office. But to Walter no news had ever come, there was no one to take an interest in the friendless Walter Varden, by which name alone he had been known for years.

Judge then of his surprise, when one day after the messenger had told them all the news that he thought would interest them, and had chatted very pleasantly on all sorts of subjects for an hour at least, he suddenly announced that he had a special communication to make to the son of Harold, Baron of Courtelle. Walter sat a moment still, hardly conscious of the meaning the words conveyed; then the blood rushed to his face, and his heart

beat with convulsive throbs, he scarcely knew what he did or said, and seizing the first opportunity of leaving the office, he retired to his own room, taking the messenger along with him, and there, in his own quiet apartment, he made him tell his tale at length.

It appeared that though the old king was still alive, he had become quite imbecile, and his son had been appointed Regent. His very first act, after his accession to power, was the proclamation the messenger had so suddenly announced, in which he declared his intention of repairing as far as lay in his power the evils of his father's reign, and offered a reward for the discovery of the orphan heir of the Baron of Courtelle, to whom it was his earnest desire to do an act of tardy justice, and restore him to the lands and titles of his father.

Walter sat for a long time, staring at the messenger, as if he would read him through and through, then suddenly starting up, he grasped him firmly by the hand, till he shook again, and took him with him to Mr. Phillips.

Walter could not speak, he pointed to his now trembling companion, and bade him deliver his message, while Mr. Phillips listened with breath-

less attention. The tale, otherwise unconnected, was interpreted by Walter's glowing cheeks. Mr. Phillips saw it all, comprehended all, even before he heard Walter's vehement exclamation, "Forgive me, O forgive me, for not telling you before!"

When calmness was once more restored, Mr. Phillips eagerly looked at the messenger and anxiously questioned him on behalf of another friend. "And Morvin, is there nothing of *his* orphan child?—but all in good time, all will go well now;" and then turning to Walter he said, "And I too have a secret, I too have a story to tell;" but as his narration was not very coherent, and rendered still less so by Walter's constant interruptions, I shall take the liberty of giving the substance of his communication in fewer and simpler words.


Walter's father, and Morvin, had been Mr. Phillips' earliest friends, and he had, after hearing of the death of the Baron of Courtelle, made many attempts to find out his widow and orphan, but without success; there was, however, another widow and orphan to whom he had been a friend indeed, and the widow of Morvin, under the name of Mrs. Temple, had been indebted to him for protection and a home.

Mr. Phillips sat with Walter till long past midnight, talking over plans for the future, and looking at the papers intrusted to Walter's keeping by the dying hands of his old nurse; and now, fully provided with every voucher, Mr. Phillips undertook with a glad heart to make all the necessary arrangements to have Walter's claims allowed and see him reinstated in his hereditary rights. Law is not very interesting, nor are pedigrees amusing, so I will pass over all the preliminaries, and the time of wearisome delay (a time, however, not idly passed by Mr. Phillips), and come to the happy day, when Walter entered the royal presence and took his seat among the peers of his native land as

WALTER, BARON OF COURTELLE.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FAIRIES' WELCOME.

T was a bright day in early autumn, when Walter, accompanied by Mr. Phillips and his loved friend Mr. Fenton, set off to take formal possession of his paternal estates. How different from his last sad journey ! They easily accomplished in a day what had taken him nearly a week, and evening had scarcely set in when the massive gates were thrown open, and, amid the glad shouts of assembled crowds, he entered the wide approach and passed under the flowery arch, on which the little black elves had seated themselves in gorgeous array, and, calling out his name and titles, wished him long life and happiness. The happy people wished to take the horses from the carriage and bear him in triumph home, but this he would not allow. " No, no," said he ; " I will walk, I will walk on my joyful return, where I walked as a



THE FAIRIES OF ALL TIME.



sorrowing outcast, and you, my kind welcoming friends, shall lead the way."

Every step Walter now took brought him in view of some well-remembered spot, that he had thought never to see again. *There* stood the broken fountain, where he had got the water for the dying creature at the porch, and *there* was the little gate where he had raised the fragile form of the prostrate figure lying in his path. He was just passing through when a shower of rose-leaves was flung around him, and looking up, he recognized at a glance the graceful form and pale delicate beauty of the lovely being he had aided in her utmost need. She stood in the full blaze of her summer beauty, with a crown of roses on her fair head, while, in memory of past kindness, she had twined garlands for the stiff stem of the young poplar, against which she still leant for support, and wreathed with choicest buds the old thorn stick, which she still clasped to her grateful heart. But on, still on—he must not linger here; the castle is in sight, and from every tower the silken flags are streaming, while the merry bells peal forth their joyful greeting. The noblest of the land stand smiling by, and the holiday crowds that line the terrace rend the air with their glad voices;—and

there stands old Widow Brown, smiling amidst her tears ; and there stands the carrier's wife, trying in vain to frown ; and there, yes, there is honest John himself, leading the loud cheer, and making the woods resound with the hearty " Hip, hurrah ! " that rings his welcome home.

But what majestic figure is this who stands at the arched doorway, clad in robes of richest green, with a royal diadem of purple jewels on her brow, and, casting her royal mantle over the cold grey stones, looks like a Queen waiting to receive her subjects' homage, and reward them with the richest gifts from her bounteous hand? Can *this* be the poor decrepit creature whose thirst he allayed with water from the broken fountain, and whose wounded limb he bound up with soft wet moss? But on, still on—and now he enters the castle, and passing through the oak-roofed hall, where old retainers give him their heartfelt blessing, he stands in the large reception chamber, where all the oldest friends of the father have assembled to welcome back the son.

Walter looks around, on many a well-known form, and hears many a well-known voice. By the glancing mirrors, and the burnished books, he sees

Dustina has been there ; the fire burns brightly on the hearth, and there stands quiet Broma at her usual post ; while the little black nigger, looking jollier than ever, sings his merriest song. The Daily Messenger is standing by a table near the fire, waiting till Walter shall have time to speak to him, while all around, on chair and cushion, screen and curtain, the bright-eyed little workers have left the traces of their presence. The singers of the grove are raising their glad chorus, and the breeze of the forest wafts its delicious perfume all around ; the table is decked with all the rich fruits of his breakfast in the cave, the regal Beauty has sent her diadem of purple gems, and the delicate Rosetta her crown of summer flowers—and Acqua, the beneficent Acqua, is there, in all her goodness, but not in all her beauty, for while she still offers cool refreshing water to his lips, she has lost her charming liberty, and is bound with a crystal chain.

Walter sighed as he thought of her wild freedom in the sunny glade, when, from the other end of the hall, he heard a ringing laugh, and looking through the open window, he beheld Acqua in all her goodness, and all her beauty too, with her shining robes and crown of water-lilies. She was standing in a

large circular fountain, sparkling with very gladness as she danced on the mimic rocks and played with the flowers that wreathed themselves around her like a zone, while her silvery tones resounded through the now quiet room ; and there too, at her feet, among the bright dew-drops, lay the little blushing daisies, looking at him with their starry eyes, and the sweet fairy sisters peeping from their nest of leaves. Even as Walter gazed the soft twilight came creeping on, and there arose on the evening air the clear sweet strain of the invisible songster who had sung his lullaby in the forest, while the pure Majestic Being with the silvery veil looked down upon the scene with her calm smile and quiet stedfast eyes.

And could there be a want even here? O yes, Walter felt *one* want—the want of Amy ; but too generous to cast a gloom over others' pleasure, he would have concealed the vain regret, had not his speaking eyes betrayed the secret of his silent lips. Mr. Phillips smiled, and waved his hand ; at the expected signal the doors flew open, and there stood Amy and her mother. Amy, the same merry Amy as of old, but grown into a tall and graceful girl, her face beaming with happiness, as she returned

Walter's rapturous greeting, kindness written in her radiant eyes and good nature on her smiling lips. Amy looked with delighted recognition on all the bright beings of Fairyland that stood around—the Fairies of Nature and the Fairies of Art, the Fairies of the Forest and the Fairies of Home, were all assembled there, and with gay smiles and cheerful voices gave her their joyous welcome.

As Walter and Amy stand thus together, with their own and their father's trusted friends around them, and the gift-giving Fairies hovering near, with every wish gratified, and every hope fulfilled, what more can they desire? Let us then leave them thus. With no remorseful recollections of a mis-spent morning, to cast, like a dark cloud, its cold shadow over their path, let us leave them in their glorious noon. May they walk steadily on in the bright sunshine, and spend the long summer day in deeds of active usefulness and words of kindly charity; may the evening find them still with the simple tastes to gather round them THE "FAIRIES OF ALL TIME," while they cull each "WAYSIDE BLESSING;" and as the shadows deepen, the darkness closes round, and the stars one by one appear, may they support each others' failing steps, and,

tranquil and happy, walk on together into the calm and holy night.

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The story is ended. Papa's seat has been vacant a long time ; Bessie is fast asleep ; Harry very busy cutting a stick and his fingers ; Annie is earnestly examining her wools, and wondering if she has enough dark red ; Margaret feels tired and hungry, and is looking for four-leaved shamrocks, and listening for the dinner bell ; while Bob, who understood the least, applauds the most, and makes the grass resound with the thumps of his vigorous tail.

THE END.





